The President. Well, I was surprised by the size and intensity of the crowd. I knew that the Romanian people—my friend Mr. Moses here keeps me updated, and I knew that they were very friendly toward America. And keep in mind, they really did suffer more in the recent past than any other people under any of the other Communist governments—I mean, what they went through here to gain their liberty. You saw behind the stage today—the President and I were before the cross there, and that cross marks the place where people were actually killed when they threw off the previous government. So I think that the price they paid is very fresh in their minds.

Romania and NATO

Q. Mr. President—[*inaudible*].

The President. They're a very impressive people. And I do believe if they keep going, they'll make it, just like I said. They've just begun in the last year or so, and they have an enormous undertaking with their economy. But if you look at the rich resources and the fact that the people here are very well educated, I'd say they have an excellent chance, a really good chance.

Q. Did they express disappointment? Were they frustrated?

The President. Oh, I think, of course, they were disappointed. But I think they also—the leaders have managed this very well, and they talked very frankly to the people and said—well, you heard what the President said today. NATO is a part of their larger strategy. And as long as they see that we're all still on the same page with the larger strategy, that we want them integrated into the West, we want their democracy to flourish, we want their economy to do well, and that if they keep going the way they're going, they will certainly be qualified for NATO membership. And everybody—a hundred percent of us in Madrid agreed that one of the things that we wanted was to have some more membership from the southern flank, because of the problems that are likely to develop in this region in the years ahead.

Q. By NATO's test, where is their area needing greatest improvement, the economy?

The President. Well, I think for one thing, when a country assumes the responsibilities of membership, you want to be—[*inaudible*]—hopefully, would even be helpful because of the extra psychological boost it gives.

So Poland and the Czech Republic and Hungary, they've all been through that roller coaster that the economists call the J-curve, where you undertake the reforms, there's a drop in economic output, people suffer, they go through it, they bottom out, and then they start coming back. And they've been through that. So you don't want to impose on a country big, new external burdens while they're going through that. But on the other hand, you don't want to take away the hope that these people have waited decades for.

Martin Luther King Assassination Investigation

Q. Mr. President, what do you think about the King bullets not matching the James Earl Ray rifle?

The President. I'm sorry, I don't know—you're the first person who's asked me that. I haven't been briefed about it.

Q. The test results show that the markings do not match.

The President. I'll review it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 7:06 p.m. at the Village Museum. In his remarks, the President referred to Alfred H. Moses, U.S. Ambassador to Romania; and convicted assassin James Earl Ray. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Excerpts From an Exchange With Reporters Aboard Air Force One

July 11, 1997

Visit to Romania

[*The President's remarks are joined in progress.*]

The President. ——but also, what if anything can be learned.

Q. When you looked down on that crowd, is it the same feeling you had in Ireland? Was it the same feeling you had in Ireland? Is it different?

The President. No, different, but wonderful. In Ireland it was—you know, my feeling there was about what was then a very much alive peace process, involving the people from whence I came, and all the hope of peace between two warring factions. You know, what I saw today was different, which is, this was the country which in the end of the Communist era was the most depressed. I mean, they never went through anything like Stalin's purges where he killed millions, but at the end of the Communist era, they were the most depressed. And to see the passion they have for their freedom and the way they honor the people who stood up for it in that square and the feeling they have about America, even though they know quite well that it was our judgment that they shouldn't come into the first tranche of NATO, I mean, it was overwhelming.

And you know, these people, too—keep in mind, it's not like Poland, where Poland was—and I'm not denigrating—but Poland is now the success story of the former Communist countries. And 3 years ago, we didn't do a public event in Poland; I don't know how many people would have been there. I can't say. But the point is, Romania is now where Poland was 3 years ago, maybe even longer, economically. They're still getting—what I said in my speech today—they're still going through the painful transition, the growing pains of going through a market economy where their economy is not growing. And they still came out to say, you know—that was an enormous expression of national conviction and self-confidence. I mean, they were confident. You know, those people, you don't—100,000 people don't show up and stand in the sun unless they believe in what they're doing, unless they believe in themselves and their future and they believe they can keep going and they can weather this storm.

You know, it was an extraordinary thing to see people who are having those kinds of economic difficulties believing they can come out of them, having no doubt that they can be full partners in the Western alliance, showing—they're also—I think Romania deserves a lot of credit. I mean, it is a Balkan country, and they just basically made a deal with the Hungarians and put them in the government to solve their border disputes, their problems with Ukraine and Hungary, which required enormous self-restraint, you know. Because a lot of what is now in Moldova—Moldavia—and Ukraine was once a part of Romania. This is a country that has really, in a matter of months, just blossomed and is thinking about itself in terms of the future in ways that, of course, you know, I believe everybody said—so I'm thrilled.

Q. That's policy. But on a personal level, do you ever get used to 100,000 people hearing you?

The President. No. I mean, personally, what I thought there—that this was—the three biggest crowds I believe I've had since I've been President, I believe—we were just talking about it—were this one, Dublin, and Berlin. There were probably 100,000 people when I was the first President to speak on the east side of the Brandenburg Gate. Of course, in Dublin and here, I'm much more involved in the events. There, I was going to ratify what others had done, in effect, what the Germans and others had done. But in each case, to me—on a personal basis, I thought, this is not me, this is the United States. This is what people think of America, and this is a tribute to what we have stood for, what we have worked for. And the other thing I thought was, this is an enormous responsibility. No other country could draw this sort of response at this moment in time.

[*At this point, a portion of the exchange was omitted from the transcript.*]

Mars Pathfinder Mission

The President. I just had to keep watching. No, right after the landing and they brought me the first pictures, color pictures of the vehicle there, still in sort of its thing, it was just exhilarating. And now, you know, everywhere I am I turn on—and last night I was dying to go to sleep, and there was this Polish language—well, I mean, the Polish was sort of dubbed over the English and all the pictures and I couldn't hear the English—I couldn't turn it off. I could not turn it off. I just had to keep watching it.

Q. It's making more headlines than the trip, sir.

The President. It's just thrilling, isn't it?

Q. But it did make history in press relations. It's the first time a President of the United States has been asked, ''What do you hear from Mars?'' and actually answered the question. [*Laughter*]

The President. I know it.

Q. Well, John Glenn wants to go.

The President. Yes, I think—I think it would be a great thing. And I do think the argument that he could be helpful in analyzing not only the effects of space travel on a normal person but also what, if anything, could be learned about weightlessness and that sustained experience that might help us back home to deal with the increasing health challenges of our aging population—I think all that's really important.

Q. It could be ironic because it was President Kennedy's order——

[*A portion of the exchange was omitted from the transcript.*]

Prime Minister Jean Chretien of Canada

Q. [*Inaudible*]—Mr. Chretien. [*Laughter*]

The President. Yes. You know, look, first of all, he is a superior human being; he is a very fine man. And he's a great leader, and he has been a fabulous ally of ours in Bosnia, in Haiti where they're carrying most of the load now, in many different ways. And we have no more strong ally. You know, this is just not going to bother me. I'm just not going to let this be static on our radar screen. We can't afford to do it. There's too much between our two countries. That's the most important thing. And there's too much between us personally. You've got to blow something like that off.

Q. Is it a basic rule of politics that you should always assume microphones are on?

The President. Yes. But you know, you remember when that happened to President Reagan when he was doing the radio address?

Q. ''We start bombing in 10 minutes''?

The President. It's happened to me before. It happened to me in '92, do you remember?

Q. Yes—Jesse Jackson.

The President. I had a particularly embarrassing incident in '92. It happened to other people in the primary in '92 were with me. If you do this business long enough and you operate under enough pressure and you have enough short nights where you don't get enough sleep, you're going to say something to somebody you wish you hadn't said that will wind up being a public statement. If you do it long enough, it's going to happen to everybody. And it's just not a big deal to me. He's a terrific human being and a great leader, and they're our great ally.

Q. But you are going to beat him on the golf course?

The President. Yes, I will try to get even on the golf course. The last time—the last two times I've played with him, I didn't play very well, and I haven't beat him like I should. So I'm going to try to do better next time.

[*A portion of the exchange was omitted from the transcript.*]

Assassination Investigations

Q. [*Inaudible*]—instruct them how we can—[*inaudible*]?

The President. First of all, I'm very interested in this, but I literally know nothing about it. All I know is what you said to me in your question. So I need to get back and really study it because obviously I'm very interested in it, not only from a forensic point of view but just because the assassination of Martin Luther King was one of the most traumatic events of my youth. I remember it like it was yesterday—April 4, 1968.

Q. Do you think Oswald killed Kennedy?

The President. Yes.

Q. You've read the report, and you believe it?

The President. I'm satisfied that they did a pretty good job on that. They did a good job. I think they——

Q. Why do you think Ruby killed Oswald? Why do you think Ruby then killed Oswald? Did they want to shut him up?

The President. I don't know.

[*A portion of the exchange was omitted from the transcript.*]

Bosnia

Q. Mr. President, can I ask—[*inaudible*]?

The President. No, no—the statement we put out is the truth. There were sealed indictments; these guys were indicted. And they were within the SFOR mandate; that is, they

were in regular contact with SFOR soldiers. And so they almost—in the British sector they felt they had an obligation to try to apprehend them because they were in regular contact with them. And we agreed to help because of the need, because there were—you know, because there could be problems and we had to get them out and get them to The Hague as soon as possible.

Q. Mr. President, I think we're trying to figure out is whether it's that circumstance or a conscious decision to change—[*inaudible*].

The President. Well, if you look at the statement, I don't think that's so much—let me say, if you look at the statement made by the foreign ministers at Sintra and if you look at the statement that came out of the group of eight and the NATO meeting itself, the statement we issued, we basically believe that we have to make an effort to save the Dayton process.

And there are lots of elements in the Dayton process. This one obviously is, at the moment, the most compelling, especially since unfortunately the man fired on the troops and therefore was killed. But if you go back over this, there are several elements to Dayton. There's what we now call SFOR and its predecessor. There's local police, train local police. There's municipal elections. There's setting up the shared institutions. There's the arms controls provisions. There's the infrastructure. And then there's the economic development. I think that's all—there are basically eight separate elements.

And what we admitted to ourselves—and one of the most interesting things at the group of eight was that because SFOR was keeping anything bad from happening, if you will, there was too much focus being given to what happens in June of '88 and too little focus being given to each of these other elements.

So I think it would be a fair conclusion for you to draw that we made a commitment in each of these places—the Sintra meeting, the NATO meeting, the G–8—that every element should be given greater attention.

We also got a new guy in there on the civilian side, Westendorp, and with a very aggressive American aide named Klein we think a lot of; he did a good job in Eastern Slavonia. And we have a very competent NATO Secretary General in Solana. And we're about—and a commander, George Joulwan, who's been great, is about to leave and be replaced by Wes Clark, who was our military man when Dayton was negotiated.

Q. Are you going to talk—[*inaudible*]?

The President. He's doing what he should be doing. He is——

Q. [*Inaudible*]—General Joulwan?

The President. Yes, I know. He wants to retire.

Q. You can't talk him—did you try?

The President. No, I don't discuss that.

Q. I'm sorry. All right.

The President. But he is fabulous.

Press Secretary Mike McCurry. We've got to go.

Q. But wait, he didn't tell us what he thinks of the Berger——

Q. It is not a change in the mission. It is a determination to execute it more forcefully and more——

The President. It would be fair for you to conclude that we have decided we should try to save Dayton, and to save Dayton, all the elements had to be implemented. And that it's too easy for everybody involved to lean on SFOR as a crutch. But it also would be wrong to conclude that there was a decision to basically totally reform the mission. This was clearly within the mission.

Q. [*Inaudible*]

The President. That's right. Properly read, this was plainly within our mission.

Q. Right.

Q. Are they under indictments?

The President. Yes. Yes, they are.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 8:35 p.m. aboard Air Force One en route to Copenhagen, Denmark. In his remarks, he referred to Bosnian Serb war crimes suspects Milan Kovacevic, who was apprehended, and Simo Drljaca, who was killed after firing on peacekeeping forces; and Carlos Westendorp, High Representative, and Jacques Klein, Principal Deputy High Representative, for Implementation of the Peace Agreement on Bosnia and Herzegovina. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this exchange. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Cambodia

July 11, 1997

Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)

Political animosity between Cambodia's Co-Prime Ministers, Prince Ranariddh and Hun Sen, erupted into armed clashes on July 5. Hun Sen, in what he claimed was a preemptive move, acted to disarm forces loyal to Ranariddh in Phnom Penh. Although Hun Sen has outwardly maintained the coalition government, he intends to replace Ranariddh as Co-Prime Minister. After fighting between the rival forces over a wide area of Phnom Penh on the weekend, an uneasy calm has been restored in the capital. No Americans were killed or wounded. Danger remains in Cambodia from increased criminal activity and military mop-up operations (including extralegal arrests) since July 5, and living conditions have deteriorated due to extensive damage sustained during the fighting. The principal area of concern is now the northwest part of the country where elements of the armed forces led by commanders still loyal to Ranariddh are resisting forces loyal to Hun Sen. The potential exists for armed clashes between contending units. U.S. citizens are not the targets of any of the contending forces, but substantial danger exists to the civilian population and any foreign residents or visitors in those regions, principally the northwest, where clashes are likely to occur.

On July 9, 1997, the State Department ordered a drawdown of official American personnel to a minimal staff of 20 persons, and recommended that private American citizens in Cambodia should leave. The departures are being accomplished, safely so far, through commercial air. If the security situation deteriorates, however, that option might quickly become unavailable.

On July 10, 1997, a Joint Task Force of approximately 550 U.S. military personnel from the U.S. Pacific Command and the United States began deploying to establish an intermediate staging base at Utapao Air Base, Thailand. These forces will stage for possible emergency noncombatant evacuation operations in Cambodia, establish communications, and conduct contingency planning. These actions will enhance the ability of the United States to ensure the security of between 1,200 to 1,400 American citizens in Cambodia if an evacuation should become necessary.

The Joint Task Force includes a forward headquarters element, fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, airport control and support equipment, and medical and security personnel and equipment.

The U.S. forces primarily come from elements of the U.S. Pacific Command; other elements are U.S. based units. All the armed services are represented. Although U.S. forces are equipped for combat, this movement is being undertaken solely for the purpose of preparing to protect American citizens and property in the event that such becomes necessary. U.S. forces will redeploy as soon as an evacuation is determined to be unnecessary or, if necessary, is completed.

I have taken this action pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct U.S. foreign relations and as Commander in Chief and Chief Executive.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution. I appreciate the support of the Congress in this action to prepare to protect American citizens in Cambodia.

Sincerely,

William J. Clinton

The White House,
July 11, 1997.

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Newt Gingrich, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Strom Thurmond, President pro tempore of the Senate. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 12.

The President's Radio Address

July 12, 1997

Good morning. I'm speaking to you from Copenhagen, Denmark, on the last day of what has been an historic week in Europe. For nearly 50 years, the NATO alliance has kept America and Western Europe secure in its peace. This week, we made NATO stronger to help keep America and all of Europe